

Child Support Advisory Board
MINUTES
August 21, 2003

Present

1st District, Jane Preece, Esq.
1st District, George Gliaudys, Jr., Esq.
2nd District, Paula G. Leftwich
2nd District, John Murrell

3rd District, Lucy T. Eisenberg, Esq.
3rd District, Betty Nordwind
4th District, Jean F. Cohen
4th District, Maria Tortorelli
5th District, Susan Speir
Chief Information Office,
Earl Bradley
Child Support Services Department,
Philip Browning

CA Department of Child Support Services,
Nancy Stone
Superior Court, David Jetton

Guests

Steven Golightly, CSSD
Lori Cruz, CSSD
Julie Paik, CSSD
Lisa Garrett, CSSD

Absent

5th District, Reginald Brass

Department of Public Social Services,
Rosie Ruiz
Children and Family Services
Patti Griffin
Franchise Tax Board, Debbie Strong

Gail Juiliano, CSSD
Carol Mentell, CSSD
Lawrence Hill, SEIU Local 660

Staff Support

Lee Millen, Board of Supervisors
Peter Papadakis, Board of Supervisors

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Eisenberg called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF JULY 17, 2003

On motion of Vice Chair Speir, seconded by Member Leftwich and unanimously carried, the minutes of July 17, 2003 were approved with the following corrections:

Page 2, Director's Report: "The DCSS ... and Nancy Stone, DCSS, ~~Leora Gershenson~~ will visit..."; Page 4: CSI Update; 1st paragraph, "Ms. Gershenson ... set asides of ~~presumed income orders case modifications.~~

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Steven Golightly, Chief Deputy Director, CSSD, reported the following on behalf of Director Browning who is attending a mandatory Department Head meeting:

- The Governor's recently approved budget does not include any new reductions for CSSD, however, \$40 million of cuts remain. It also authorizes the Governor to bill automation penalties that for Los Angeles County amounts to \$10.4 million;

Nancy Stone, DCSS, indicated that it has not been decided if the penalties will be billed to the counties; however, the penalty should not be paid out of child support funding.

- The Board of Supervisors approved on July 29, 2003, to include \$1.3 million held in a CSSD trust as part of the current CSSD operating budget to offset staffing and benefits costs; as a result, CSSD's initial staff cuts were rescinded by the Board. DCSS will work to obtain a Federal funding match of \$2.7 million;
- The Department released 105 temporary student workers and 133 temporary agency employees, 16 staff were transferred to other Departments or secured employment in the private sector, and 15 were reduced in rank effective July 31, 2003; as a result CSSD is seriously under staffed;
- Attorneys committed to 3,761 days without pay for a one year period which is the equivalent of \$1.1 million and a saving of about 175 positions;
- The revised organizational chart (copy on file) is not a final version, Research & Development does not exist and staff was moved to Julie Paik's Bureau, 11 attorneys from Ms. Paik's Bureau were transferred to Lori Cruz' Bureau, State Hearing operations was not abolished and remains in Ms. Paik's Bureau with three attorneys to coordinate those hearings, and Communications/Marketing and Appellate/Special Litigation reports directly to Director Browning. A new chart will be provided next month that will reflect some additional changes that have occurred.
- As a result of discussions with the Auditor Controller's Office, it was determined that the County escheated about \$6.5 million to the County general fund of uncashed warrants issued by the CSSD;

Ms. Stone reported that DCSS had submitted its report on the Undistributed Collections Initiative to the federal government for review and comment. As part of the UDC effort, DCSS discovered that the Los Angeles County child support agency had \$6.9 million in uncashed checks (stale warrants) that had been previously reported as distributed collections but had never been worked to ensure the monies got to the CP or NCP, as appropriate. This occurred because there was no process in place between the local child support agency and the auditor controller to identify these monies and bring them back into the system. As of June, the county had brought these monies back in and were working Locate on the cases associated with the uncashed checks. Further, there is now a process in place to ensure that stale checks are worked on an ongoing basis.

- The CSSD has worked with the Auditor Controller's Office to create a separate trust fund for undistributed monies, and electronic Locate tools are being used to revisit UDC cases. There are now weekly Auditor reports forwarded to the CSSD on uncashed checks to avoid similar cases.
- The Auditor Controller's Office issued a report on contract monitoring (copy on file). Also, an RFP was issued, bids were received and evaluated, and the Board of Supervisors approved EDP Legal Services, Inc., to provide service processing as of August 28, 2003, at a savings of \$800,000 annually compared to the previous vendor (SLS).

Mr. Golightly agreed to provide the CSAB with an automated report on substitute service, a summary of the new EDP contract and a proposed monitoring report of EDP service; monitoring reports will be presented on an ongoing basis to the CSAB. Chairperson Eisenberg noted that Mike Pirolo has advised that the audit on sub service should be completed in September/October 2003.

- Nancy Stone and staff met with CSSD staff regarding the PIP. It seems that the DCSS was generally pleased with progress made to date. However, Director Browning forwarded a notice to the Board of Supervisors yesterday that the 60 day Phase 1 would expire today and predicted that the DCSS would place CSSD on Phase 2.

Ms. Stone reported that the full recommendation has not been completed. If Phase 2 is implemented then DCSS staff would spend part of each week at CSSD in an intensive effort to finalize the PIP. The time period is indefinite and is based on improving the delivery of services to the families that rely on it. Mr. Golightly noted that the current collections for July 2003 was at 42% and is the result of an intensive modification process initiated with the courts to reduce the denominator; 25,000 modifications were completed this year through the end of July 2003 in comparison to 2,500 modifications completed last year, and increases in current collection rates are anticipated.

- The PIP recommendation to establish a new business plan has not been implemented to date; however, Director Browning is committed to begin a pilot project in one Division to reengineer case processing and operations. The CAO, Urban Research Office, has offered to provide assistance to set-up the pilot, Director Browning has asked the CAO to provide a staff person with expertise to lead this effort, and that DCSS provide assistance and clarify their role in this effort.
- The Employer Forum is scheduled for September 17, 2003 and CSAB members are invited to attend,
- AB 1752 recently signed by the Governor reduces arrears calculations and presumed income. It allows staff to move away from a MBSAC calculation to one that uses minimum wage based on a 40 hour work week that will in effect reduce the denominator. Ms. Stone noted that with the collection enhancement program Los Angeles County will receive \$1,041,673, which amounts to a final allocation of \$142.2 million in FY2003-04.

Board Chair's Report

Following discussion, on motion of Member Gliaudys, seconded by Member Tortorelli and unanimously carried, the CSAB approved the Semi-Annual Report, including recommended changes (copy on file) for submittal to the Board of Supervisors, and that Members forward any additional changes to Chairperson Eisenberg within the next 10 days.

REVIEW AND DISCUSS MONTHLY REPORTS/PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Following discussion, the CSAB agreed to continue receiving the MCC/MCI log and Chairperson Eisenberg requested a staff report next month on Division responses to telephonic/written inquiries and a CSI summary of the annual report at the October meeting. It was agreed to discontinue receiving the Division Inventory Report and the Ombuds Quarterly Report. Also, the Order Calculation Method Percentages show a dramatic improvement, and the Money on Hold reflecting a sharp increase in July 2003 is the result of the \$6.5 million of uncashed checks monies returned to CSSD.

In response to Chairperson Eisenberg, Dean DeGruccio, Call Center, reported that staff cuts (30 less staff currently), including low morale and staff on job interviews due to impending cuts, have impacted performance (abandon call rate, average customer wait time, etc.) for July 2003. Julie Paik, Deputy Director, reported that due to the CSSD's reorganization 17 staff will be moved to the Call Center and 28 loaned to the CSI will be returned to the Call Center. Staff has decreased from 210 in July 2002 to 160 in July 2003.

Discussion ensued on Customer Service data, call center inquiries resolved on the spot and abandon call rate. It was recommended that the Customer Service report, sub section 2b measurement, indicate No Referral Made versus Resolved on the Spot. Also, CSI is ending operations and about 100 staff will return to their respective Divisions on October 1, 2003. Further, Mr. DeGruccio indicated that limiting the 800 number to non local callers will save the CSSD about \$119 thousand per year.

CSI UPDATE: Progress report to date and predictions for collections in FY 2003/04

Gail Juiliano, CSSD, distributed the Monthly CSSD Collections on Current Support for Months through July 2003 (copy on file), and reported a 43.53% for collections in July 2003. The dramatic increase is due to an \$8.5 million reduction of the total current support due from October 2002 (\$62,809,358.29) to July 2003 (\$54,320,811.88). With a projected \$10 million reduction in October for the total current support due per month, it is anticipated that the CSSD can reach the targeted 45% collection rate in Federal FY 2003-04.

CASE OPENING: a) Report on cleanup of cases unopened in 20 days; and b) New procedures for case opening and whether/how that has affected the statistics on order calculation

Bob Friedlander, CSSD, reported that 14,000 backlogged cases were beyond the 20-day timeframe period, and through a concerted effort in all Divisions there are currently no backlogged cases and new applications are current. The improved procedures include additional intake staff in each Division and faster computers. Further, referrals are worked on as received and not prioritized for case work. In response to Chairperson Eisenberg, Mr. Friedlander noted that more orders and defaults are anticipated, and Ms. Juiliano advised that there is new legislation to set presumed orders at minimum wage.

DPSS INTERFACE: Report on implementing changes regarding DPSS case opening and on installation of 20 computer stations

Tricia Vitasa, CSSD, reported the following: 20 Leader computer stations were installed at 10 locations; about 60 people will be given access to Leader; training will consist of dial-up training for trainers and how to navigate in Leader; and those trained will train the remaining office staff. Ms. Vitasa noted that DPSS has been asked to allow additional CSSD staff to access Leader. The next DPSS and CSSD interface meeting is scheduled in October 2003.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES: Discussion of how problems identified by CSAB should be handled

Chairperson Eisenberg requested that this agenda item be deferred to next month.

CUSTOMER SERVICE: a) Report on staffing changes; b) Rate of timely complaint resolution; c) Status of resolution of backlogged cases; and d) Review of DCSS quarterly report

Julie Paik, Deputy Director, reported that due to Member Nordwind's eloquent defense at the last meeting, the State Hearing operation was kept centralized. There are currently 13 complaint investigators and four appeals hearing specialist vacancies. The recruitment of five prospective appeals hearing specialists was rescinded due to DHR concerns; however, four of the five prospective staff are expected to be recruited in the near future. In the interim, attorneys are handling the hearings.

Emy Tzimoulis, Division Chief, reported that three staff were lost to budget cuts. In response to Vice Chair Speir, Carol Mentell, Ombudsman Office, noted that backlogs in DCSS State Hearings occur due to the limited number of Administrative Law Judges that can hear cases. However, the complainant is now asked to consider appearing in another County where a Judge is available rather than waiting longer periods within their own County; this has been a successful alternative. In response to Member Nordwind, Ms. Tzimoulis reported that the CSSD would not immediately know when a complainant has requested a hearing; the DCSS mails out this data in the preliminary review notice.

Ms. Tzimoulis distributed a CRTS (the state program that tracks complaints) report that reflects complaint statistics, and noted that of the CSSD total, 28% of complaints received and 27% of complaints past due are Interstate related cases. In response to Vice Chair Speir, Ms. Mentell reported that with only 13 complaint investigators in the Ombudsman Office, CSO II's that can not work as investigators are being transferred to the Interstate Unit to work on backlogged complaint cases and act as a liaison for the Ombudsman Office. If the Ombudsman Office is working to resolve a case, staff generally does not rely on the physical file. However, on occasion there is a need to pull the case and process the necessary forms for an audit, a modification or a stipulation. The liaison is in a position to assist on these issues and resolve cases on a timely basis. In response to Member Nordwind, Ms. Mentell noted that the Ombudsman Office would analyze the case for steps to be taken for resolution and the CSO II's in the Divisions would do the case work in coordination with the Ombudsman Office.

Following further discussion, staff agreed to report back in about four months on interstate case processing and their affect on complaints resolved. Also, agenda 10 (c) and (d) will be deferred to next month.

COMMITTEE REPORT:

Wage Assignment Committee

Chair Speir reported briefly that the Committee is looking at Locate data to determine why the number of paying wage assignments is not increasing. A letter with Director Browning's signature was forwarded to Curt Child informing him that the data is not as current as they believe it is. Ms. Stone noted that upon receipt of this letter, the 25 case-sample was requested and Ms. Juiliano forwarded it to DCSS. The Synergy vendor is researching this issue case by case to determine why there was not an updated case date. Chair Speir noted that an additional 40 cases were identified containing old data; Ms. Stone will be forwarded these samples for vendor review.

The Committee also reviewed conversion order issues, incomplete street address issues and other issues involving a 2% surcharge on 25 cases (copy on file). Ms. Stone agreed to report back on fees that can be imposed on employers that do not report new hires to EDD.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Albert Morris, Esq., reported that his contacts with CSSD staff proved difficult in his attempts to obtain the file and resolve the case of a client he is representing pro bono. A letter had previously been forwarded to CSSD requesting case data; however, a reply was never received. Also, personal appeals in person and on the phone were not well received, and Call Center staff never referred him to the Ombudsman Office. Mr. Morris thanked Ms. Mentell for her assistance today in addressing the majority of his concerns. Member Gliaudys noted that systemic problems are evident in this case in that even an attorney has difficulty accessing necessary information from CSSD staff to help resolve a case. Member Nordwind concurred that a systemic problem is occurring department-wide.

Mr. Friedlander advised that Call Center staff have phone number referrals available to all callers and an in-house attorney is available to speak with a client's legal counsel. Following discussion, Ms. Mentell agreed to review the case for systemic issues and the CSAB will be forwarded the case review to determine if further discussion is warranted.

In response to Chairperson Eisenberg, Mr. Morris agreed to review the MCC/MCI Log for any omissions and report back to Ms. Mentell.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.